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Requesting the Provinces to Establish an Internet Connection (19 March 1998)

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March 19, 1998

To all the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

This week at a *tempo forte* meeting of the General Council, we decided to ask each province to establish two Internet connections, with provision for e-mail:

- 1) at the provincial house,
- 2) at the site of the principal house of formation (e.g., at the theologate or the novitiate).

It would be ideal if this could be done before the General Assembly, since we intend to provide, via Internet, regular bulletins, perhaps even daily ones, about the sessions of the Assembly. Below, I offer you a number of the considerations that led us to ask that all the provincial offices and the principal houses of formation have access to e-mail. We found them convincing.

1. This will facilitate rapid communication between the Visitors and the General Curia, and vice versa. E-mail letters go back and forth almost immediately. When the network is well-established, moreover, it will be possible for us to send *Nuntia* and other documents via e-mail. These items will arrive very quickly and can then be printed and reproduced for the confreres of the province.
2. After the initial installation costs, this method of communication will be considerably cheaper than ordinary mail or fax. E-mail transmissions cost only the price of a local phone call, plus the fee for the provider.
3. As one visits the provinces, one sometimes notes the lack of Vincentian books and periodicals in our houses of formation. When this network is set up, we can begin placing articles in the mailboxes of the houses of formation, via e-mail; these will be in English, French, and Spanish according to the preferred language of the area. The houses of formation themselves can also exchange useful materials with one another. Many confreres who write these days do so

on computer disks. E-mail will enable them to offer their articles to all of the houses of formation easily.

4. A connection to the Internet can also offer many provinces the opportunity to see the Vincentian pages created by other provinces and members of the Vincentian Family. At these sites, much helpful information is available. In addition, the Internet can offer access to news services throughout the world which can provide a global perspective on many current issues.

About half of the provincial offices in the Congregation already are on e-mail. It should not be too difficult for most others to get on-line, since most provinces already have computers. Besides a computer and a telephone line, one needs to have an appropriate program (like Netscape, Microsoft Explorer, Eudora, etc.); such programs are frequently already in your computer. One also needs a modem and a provider. There may be one or two countries where it is still difficult to have access to a telephone and a provider, but even in those places, the problem may be superable.

As soon as you are on-line, would you please contact us at the General Curia, by e-mail, so that we will have your number. If you experience problems in getting online, please let me know.

Pope John Paul II recently encouraged those working with this new technology to "increase the Church's presence on the Internet as a means of proclaiming the Good News in the so-called 'Information Age.'" ¹

In that spirit, I would deeply appreciate your cooperation in this matter. I think it will significantly facilitate communications within the Congregation as we strive to serve the poor more effectively.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

¹ [nota1] Message of the Pope Jean-Paul II to the participants of the 4th Meeting about the Net of Information of the Church in Latin America (RIAL - Red de Informática de la Iglesia en América Latina) given in the Dominican Republic from 3 to 6 March, 1998.